

July 26, 2006

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Senate
476 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Clinton,

On behalf of Pediatrix Medical Group and Pediatrix Screening, we would like to take this opportunity to commend you for your leadership in introducing the "Screening for Health of Infants and Newborns, 'SHINE' Act" and your commitment to promote effective newborn screening for our nation's most vulnerable population.

Pediatrix Medical Group is the nation's largest physician group of neonatologists, maternal-fetal medicine specialists, pediatric cardiologists and other physician specialty services, with around 860 physicians practicing in 32 states and Puerto Rico. Because we treat so many babies, we are able to track the outcomes of infants in a centralized database, as well as conduct extensive clinical research to improve outcomes for mother and baby.

While our roots are in neonatology, our commitment to the care of newborns and children allowed us to branch into other specialties. Over the last decade, Pediatrix has provided metabolic and genetic screening as well as infant hearing screening services to over 2.5 million babies. Newborn screening complements our overall mission to help ensure the healthiest possible start in life for infants.

Because of our history in developing the most comprehensive newborn screening available today, we are all too aware of the existing disparities that still exist among states that do not provide comprehensive screening services and the needless suffering these disparities can cause for infants and their families. As Congress seeks solutions to this problem, we have long believed that it is important to recognize that resources are already available and being used now in the private sector to help implement and conduct quality comprehensive screening programs, through a variety of public-private screening partnerships, according to states' individual needs. Continued expansion of these public-private screening partnerships is the logical means to serve the evolving needs of newborn screening programs nationwide in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Your legislation provides a balanced and effective approach to addressing newborn screening issues, most particularly in the following ways: establishing a newborn screening clearinghouse to standardize data collection and measure performance of newborn screening entities, such as false-positive rates; ensuring the wide-spread availability of information to parents and providers about comprehensive newborn screening services that are available from CLIA certified laboratories;

and providing a level playing field for qualified private laboratories to seek federal support to work with states on demonstration projects to enhance screening services, both for the current 'core condition' as well as additional newborn conditions that are less common.

Pediatrix Medical Group and its subsidiary, Pediatrix Screening, are pleased to support this worthwhile legislation and we look forward to working with you to help enact the bill. If our physicians and newborn screening leaders can provide any technical information that could be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us directly, or through our Washington legislative counsel, Deborah Outlaw at 703/819-7783.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Slimak', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Slimak
VP of Operations
Pediatrix Screening